

Paola Free Library  
101 East Peoria  
Miami County  
Kansas

HABS No. KS-52

HABS  
KANS,  
61-PAOLA,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PAOLA FREE LIBRARY

(HABS NO. KS-52)

HABS  
KANS,  
61-PAOLA,  
1-

Location: 101 East Peoria (southeast corner of Agate and Peoria),  
Paola, Miami County, Kansas

USGS Paola West Quadrangle, Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: N3830-W9452.5/7.5

Present Owner: The City of Paola

Present Occupant  
and Use: Paola Free Library

Significance: The Paola Free Library was designed by George Putnam Washburn, a prominent Kansas architect who designed 13 of Kansas' 105 courthouses. The corner tower of the library is typical of Washburn's work and was designed late in his career. The building serves as one of the cultural centers in Paola, and the library serves patrons from the surrounding countryside and villages as well as the citizens of Paola.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1905-1906
2. Architect: George Putnam Washburn (1846-1922) was born in Ohio. He entered the Union Army during the Civil War, and afterwards took up work as a carpenter. He moved to Kansas City in 1878 and there applied his drafting and mathematical education. In 1882 he established an architectural practice. He moved to Ottawa, Kansas, and secured a position as architect with the Kansas State Board of Charitable Institutions, which he held in the 1880s and again in 1900-1902. Washburn received a degree in architecture from the International Correspondence School.

George Washburn's career spanned the 1880s up to 1907 when he retired after the sudden death of his wife. Washburn is best known for his work in designing courthouses. He designed 13 in Kansas, including the one in Paola, and also designed the courthouses in Pittsfield, Pike Co., Ill., and Beaver Co., Okla. The Anthony Republican and Bulletin stated: "A central strain of similarity runs through them (courthouses), though no two are alike. Most prominent among their features are corner towers; arched windows and door openings, elevated porches, central clock towers and a sensitive handling of detail . . ."

Washburn also designed the Girls Industrial School, School for the Deaf (Olathe), the Reform School at Topeka, the Johnson County Infirmary, the Johnson County Jail; and in Ottawa, where he resided, he designed the First National Bank, the Baptist Church, Ottawa University, Ottawa Library, and all the schools. He also designed the Opera House at Pleasant Hill, Missouri.

Washburn was an admirer and proponent of the style of architecture known as "Richardsonian Romanesque," developed by the nineteenth century architect, Henry Hobson Richardson. Richardson adapted the basic elements of the Romanesque Revival into a new and popular style. Many of the characteristics of this style can be found in buildings designed by George Washburn, notably the Paola Free Library.

This style was characterized by openings with low, round arches often supported on squatty Byzantine or other medieval style columns. Windows were placed in rows or clusters, divided by masonry mullions. Often two contrasting colors of stone, or brick with stone trim were used, with judicious placement of carved stone panels for decorative effect. Frequently a tower was included, as in the library, with a pyramid-shaped roof. The Richardsonian Romanesque style as adapted by Washburn in the Paola Free Library conveys a feeling of solidity and substance.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands as well as surrounding lots which the City of Paola owns and on which an addition will be placed:

1892 - Deed, April 18, 1892. J. W. and M. D. Sponable, husband and wife, to the City of Paola. (Deed Record 61, p. 93)

1905 - Deed, July 8, 1905. Trustees of the First Baptist Church to the City of Paola. (Deed Record 84, p. 476)

Deed, July 26, 1905. Heirs of the Estate of J. W. Sponable to the City of Paola. (Deed Record 84, p. 478)

1984 - Deed, January 27, 1984. Donald L. Hadlock and Marsena C. Hadlock to the City of Paola. (Deed Record 303, p. 298)

4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: The builder of the Paola Free Library was the firm of Fordyce Bros. of Paola, Kansas. Names of suppliers are not known.
  5. Original plans and construction: No original drawings or plans have been located.
  6. Alterations and additions: None have occurred.
- B. Historical Context: The Paola Free Library building was erected in 1905-1906 and was opened to the public in the spring of 1906, forty years after the public library was established. The building was made possible through the generosity of John W. Sponable, who donated the land, and Mrs. Martha Smith, a native of England, who left a bequest of over \$10,000 to erect a new library building. Through the continued interest of the Sponable family, the gift of many books was made to the library, and through the years, interested citizens have continued to work to make the Paola Free Library a vital institution in the Miami County town. The library budget is mainly composed of local tax moneys, although the library does receive a grant from the Northeast Kansas Library System as well as a grant from the Kansas State Library. In 1984 the City of Paola passed a charter

ordinance which allows the library to levy a tax beyond the normal statutory limitation, a clear indication that the city supports the funding structure which the library board has recommended. In addition to the inhabitants of the city of Paola, the library has grown to become a major resource library in the county and serves citizens of many other areas. As a consequence of its growth through the years the library building has become woefully inadequate in its ability to hold a large collection and to provide adequate reader space, meeting rooms, work space for the librarians, etc. An addition to the existing building has become a pressing need.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Paola Free Library, located in the downtown area of Paola, is of Richardsonian Romanesque design, and is of architectural merit because of the integrity of its facade.
2. Condition of Fabric: The exterior brick masonry is basically sound although there has been some moisture intrusion around the fireplaces causing some small settlement in the fireplace base, and some moisture behind exterior face brick on the east side of the building. There are areas above two windows which have damaged face brick, apparently from freeze-thawing of the water. The entire structure, according to an engineer's report, "appears to be very stable and has been reasonably well maintained."

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is two stories including a basement under the entire first floor, the finish grade being one half or less the distance between basement floor and first floor. The plan is slightly irregular in shape, with a round tower, approximately 19' in diameter, on the northeast corner. The major dimensions are 32' by 70'.
2. Wall construction: the basement walls are limestone, approximately 2' thick. The exterior face above grade is hand pitched finish with a batter of 3/4" per foot, the top course is a smooth sawed face. The stone is believed to be Carthage Missouri limestone. The first floor walls are face brick, grayed-buff color. The brick is referred to as St. Louis Gray, the manufacturer is unknown. The brick walls are three wythe, 12" thick with plaster finish on inside. The brick are laid in a standard running bond with each sixth course recessed 1/2". A quoin effect is achieved with a darker shade brick at all corners and window jambs.
3. Structural system: Exterior stone and brick walls are load bearing. The first floor framing is wood joists (none are exposed to verify exact size) bearing on a steel beam and columns extending down the center of the building. The first floor ceiling and roof are wood framing, also center bearing, apparently steel enclosed with decorative wood columns and beam.

- B. 4. Roof: The roof is basically hipped, approximately 7 in 12 pitch, with a gable on a 2' projection to the west, a gable incorporating a chimney from the basement on the south, and a small brick faced dormer incorporating the fireplace chimney on the east. The tower roof is a steep conical tower, flared at the bottom, with a decorative metal finial.

The roof covering is dark gray (originally) asbestos slate. The cornice is formed galvanized sheet metal with pressed metal brackets spaced in groups of three at main roof corners and continuous, about 2" on center, on gables and the tower. The metal cornice encloses wood framing and a copper lined gutter.

5. Entrance: The entrance is the main decorative feature of the building. The wood and beveled glass doors and sidelights are recessed behind a stone arch and columns. The semi-circular arch is cut limestone with a decorative border edge. The stone face is 3' wide with center opening of 3' radius. The supporting columns are green granite with cut limestone base and capital. A stained glass panel containing the words "Paola Free Library" fills the door transom.

A stone pier, approximately 3' high with a circular shaped end, abuts the entry steps on each side. The treads probably are stone, but they are now carpet-covered.

6. Windows: All windows are double-hung wood sash, each with a single pane. The first floor windows are generally 4'-0" x 7'-6" or 4'-0" x 6'-0", the basement windows are 4'-0" x 4'-6". All windows have limestone sills and lintel with a molding shaped top.

#### Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: Entrance to the building is at a landing between first two floor levels. Five risers straight ahead lead to the first floor which is comprised of one main room maintaining the book stacks and reading area, and the tower room which is principally a reference area.

A stairway to the right of the landing leads to the basement lobby, one to the left led to the ladies ante-room and restroom. This stairway has been closed and the rooms are now used for storage. From the lobby there is access to these storage rooms, storage below the stairway, another restroom and the main basement room which is used for the children's library area. Two rooms at the rear of the children's room are used for periodical storage and mechanical equipment. The stairs are all wood with carpet covering.

2. Floors: The first floor has wood flooring which has been covered with vinyl asbestos tile and that is covered with carpet. The basement floor is concrete covered with carpet in the lobby and children's room, and vinyl asbestos tile in the storage and restrooms.

- B. 3. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceilings on both floors are plastered and painted. All ceilings are flat except the ceiling in the first floor main room which is divided into panels with coved sides by a beam pattern running each direction. The ceiling height is approximately 15' on the first floor and 8'-6" in the basement.
4. Doors: The doors on the first floor, between the entry and main room and between the main room and tower room, are a pair of 2'-6" x 7'-0" wood frame with beveled glass panels; each door has a glass transom and the tower room door includes glass sidelights. The basement doors are wood paneled.
5. Fireplaces: The main room on each floor has a fireplace on the east wall. The face of the first floor fireplace is a decorative brick and contains memorial plaques to Mr. J. W. Sponable and Mr. J. U. Smith.
6. Light fixtures: Fluorescent lighting is used in all main rooms.
7. Heating: Heat is supplied through floor mounted radiators on the first floor and ceiling hung radiators in the basement. The boiler is fired by gas or electricity. Air conditioning has been added on each floor.

Site: The original lot upon which the building sits measures only 39' wide (along Peonia Street) by 127'-6" (along Agate Street). A sign identifying the building is beside the north entrance walk and a few bushes have been placed on the north of the building. Most of the property south of the building to an alley has been covered with crushed rock for parking. A public sidewalk abuts the west side of the building and a narrow grass area lies on the east side.

The property has been increased by the addition of a 55' wide lot on the east. A building addition and more landscaping is to be placed on this area.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings and Early Views: Cannot be located if, indeed, they still exist.
- B. Primary and Unpublished Sources: Miami County deed books, Paola, Kansas
- C. Secondary and Published Sources:

"Harper County Courthouse One of 13 Washburn Designs," Anthony Republican & Bulletin, September 13, 1978.

Kansas Government Journal, Vol. XXXII, #7, July, 1946.

Portrait and Biographical Album of Leavenworth, Douglas and Franklin Counties. Chicago, Chapman Bros., 1899.

von Achen, J. Kurt. Lives and Works of Early Kansas Architects. Thesis for Master of Architecture at the University of Kansas. 1966.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Plans call for an addition to the existing Paola Free Library building. Documentation of the existing building was undertaken by the Kansas State Library in compliance with a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the completion of the Paola Free Library addition plan. Historic data was compiled by Allen Gardiner, of the Kansas State Library staff. Architectural information was provided by Howard Koupal, Architect, KSK Associates. Photographs were taken by Dan Collins.

Prepared by: Allen Gardiner  
LSCA Title II Coordinator  
Kansas State Library  
September 1984